

The t.bone RB 500

£85

Fancy some retro ribbon sounds? **Jon Musgrave** gets miking with this re-issued affordable design

CONTACT WHO: Thomann **WEB:** www.tbone.audio **KEY FEATURES** **TYPE:** Dynamic
TRANSDUCER: Ribbon **PICKUP PATTERN:** Figure 8 **RIBBON:** 2" aluminium (strength: 2 µm) **MAX. SPL:** 148dB **FREQ RANGE:** 30Hz-18kHz **SENSITIVITY:** 1mV/PA (0dB=1V/PA @ 1kHz) **SIZE:** 105 x 235 x 80mm (inc bracket) **WEIGHT:** 995g (inc cable) **PRICING:** FetAmp Bundle – £129





THE PROS & CONS



Great for guitar amp and bass amp miking

Nice retro look with large grille and u-shaped bracket

Well made with quality finish



Captive lead not to everyone's taste

Not a do-it-all mic

Quite noisy

German retailer and manufacturer Thomann has recently relaunched its affordable 'the t.bone' product line, which includes a large range of microphones, headphones and wireless systems including in-ear monitoring. On the test bench today is the RB 500 ribbon microphone. Inspired by a number of classic designs, this figure 8 mic features a large ribbon capsule housed in an oversized headstock, with gunmetal grey body and traditional u-shaped body mounted bracket. In typical retro style it has a hard wired captive cable, which I'm not a massive fan of, and at about three metres you'll probably need to extend it anyway. That said, it's good to see there is a lead clamp attached to the mic mount and this should reduce the strain on the cable entry point. The overall mic finish and build quality seems very good, and there's also a rather stylish duffel-style pouch, although it's quite a challenge getting both the mic and its lead back into this.

Ribbon mics often have quite modest output level, and at 1mV/Pa the RB 500 is no exception, needing

plenty of preamp gain. This might explain why for an extra £44 you can buy it bundled with t.bone's FetAmp inline amp. Alas, there's no quoted noise figure, and listening back to my test recordings revealed some low level background hiss. I don't think this would be a problem for most applications, but I'd avoid using it for quiet or ambient applications. As you would expect for a figure 8 design, the 90 degree off axis point provides excellent rejection across the frequency spectrum. What's more, the RB 500 is also pretty consistent between front and back.

Moving on to the sound, the RB 500 is very mid-range-focused, with both low-frequency and particularly high-frequency tail off being quite noticeable. This makes it great for speech, and for curtailing harshness in sounds such as cymbals, assuming that's what you want to do. It delivers a punchy strummed acoustic sound, although as mentioned I wouldn't use it for quieter picked acoustic because it would be a bit noisy. Where it really shines is overdriven electric guitar, smoothing out the edginess of a cabinet close mic for a rounded rich sound. The figure 8 pattern also picks up some ambience from the back of the mic, and assuming your

room isn't too lively, this also gives the sound a bit of breathing space. I find recordings made with ribbon mics are easy to enhance with EQ, and this is true with the RB 500, so if you decide it's too dull, hefty sweetening EQ is definitely an option.

It may sound like I have quite a few issues with the RB 500, but in all honesty they are just niggles, and things that you'd expect done better on a more pricey mic. Actually, I quite like this mic and if you regularly record rocky guitars, it adds a tonal flavour not really available from other mic types. Given the amazing price I think it's well worth checking out. **FM**

FM VERDICT

7.8

If you're interested in trying a retro-style ribbon mic the RB 500 offers a capable and very affordable entry point